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TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION – NOVEMBER 5, 2014

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At 8:23 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 5, 2014 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Gibson.

3. ROLL CALL/ MOTIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE

Present: Commissioners D'anjou, Gibson, Herring, Skoll, Tsao, Watson and Chairperson Polcari.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Assistant Lang, Deputy Community Development Director Cessna, Plans Examiner Noh, Sr. Fire Prevention Officer Kazandjian, Fire Prevention Specialist Maurer, Fire Prevention Specialist Krieger, Associate Civil Engineer Symons and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Thursday, October 30, 2014.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Watson moved to approve the October 15, 2014 Planning Commission minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

8. TIME EXTENSIONS – None.

9. SIGN HEARINGS- None.

10. CONTINUED HEARINGS – None.

*

Chairperson Polcari explained the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

11. WAIVERS

11A. WAV14-00005: RODGER BARCLAY (ANDREW & SHARON HORODNER)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Waiver of the side yard setback requirement in conjunction with a second-story addition on property located in the R-1 Zone at 2552 227th Street. This project is Categorically Exempt for CEQA per Guidelines Section 15305 – Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Lang introduced the request.

Rodger Barclay, CML Construction Services, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He explained that the homeowners would like to add a second story that maintains the existing side yard setback, which does not meet current requirements.

Commissioner Skoll noted that the staff report mentions that this is not considered a significant remodel even though a second story is being added and asked how this is determined.

Planning Manager Lodan advised that it is considered a significant remodel if more than 85% of the existing square footage is added.

Sharon Horodner, 2552 227th Street, stated that she grew up in Torrance and wants to raise her family here but just needs a little more space.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved to approve WAV14-00005, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-059.

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-059. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

12. FORMAL HEARINGS

12A. DIV14-00014: DEL AMO FASHION CENTER OPERATING CO., LLC

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Division of Lot to allow a Lot Line Adjustment on property located in the H-DA1 Zone at 3525 Carson Street. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities and 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Lang introduced the request.

Chuck Davis, Senior Vice President of Development for Simon Properties Group, reported that this action will clean up entitlements for the shopping center, some of which date back to horse and buggy days, and allow for the trading of buildings with Macy's. He explained that Macy's will take ownership of the building where its men's department/furniture store has now been consolidated, and Del Amo Fashion Center will take ownership of building that formerly housed Macy's home goods/furniture store and Jo-Ann's Fabric and Craft Store. He noted that the final map is expected to record by the first quarter 2015 and this Division of Lot will be incorporated.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to approve DIV14-00014, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-060.

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-060. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

12B. CUP14-00022: ENTERPRISE RENT-A-CAR COMPANY OF LOS ANGELES, LLC
(ANN-MARIE HARRIS)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of an automobile rental business on property located in the M-2 Zone at 20537 and 20541 Western Avenue. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301- Existing Facilities.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Lang introduced the request.

Tina Choi, representing Enterprise Rent-A-Car, voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. She provided background information about the company, explaining that it was started as a small operation by a naval officer who had served on the USS Enterprise and now employs over 80,000 people and it is unique in the rent-a-car business because it picks up customers free of charge. She noted that this location is intended to service business customers, visitors and residents.

In response to Commissioner Herring's inquiry, Ms. Choi clarified that the company will be located in two units that are currently vacant within the retail center and confirmed that it plans to patronize the existing carwash on the premises.

Commissioner Herring expressed the hope that the business would increase employment opportunities in this area.

Ms. Choi stated that company is very committed to hiring local residents and she would encourage her client to make this a priority.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Herring and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Tsao moved to approve CUP14-0022, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-061.

MOTION: Commissioner Tsao moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-061. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

12C. CUP14-00024: JOHN HAVARD (MCDONALD'S USA, LLC)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the redevelopment of the existing drive-through fast food restaurant site (demolition of the existing building and the construction of a new drive-through fast food restaurant building) on property located in the C-3 Zone at 5019 Torrance Boulevard. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15332 – In-Fill Development.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Lange introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of a modification to Condition No. 15 in Resolution No. 14-062.

Griffin Williamson, representing McDonald's USA, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval, including No. 15 as amended. He reported that McDonald's was proposing to demolish the existing fast-food restaurant, which was built in 1963, and build a new upgraded one.

In response to Commissioner Tsao's inquiry, Mr. Williamson confirmed that there will be a pedestrian pathway from the Victor Street side of the parking lot to ensure that customers can safely cross the drive-through lane to get to the building. He reported that construction is expected to take only 100 days and will commence sometime next year.

Commissioner Herring stated that he believes this will be a great improvement and was pleased that electric vehicle charging stations will be included in the upgrade.

Commissioner Watson echoed comments about the EV charging stations.

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to approve CUP14-0024, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-062.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-062. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Herring and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

13. RESOLUTIONS

13A. DIV14-00009: PETER SY (EHZ DEVELOPMENT INC.)

Planning Commission adoption of a resolution reflecting their decision to deny a Division of Lot to allow a flag-lot subdivision of one parcel into four parcels on property located in the R-1 Zone at 2126 238th Street.

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-056.

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-056. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

13B. CUP14-00015 (EAS14-00003): PUBLIC STORAGE, INC.

Planning Commission adoption of a resolution reflection their decision to deny a Negative Declaration and a Conditional Use Permit to allow the demolition of the front section of an existing storage building and construction of a new four-story self-storage building on property located in the ML(M1-PP) Zone at 4460 Del Amo Boulevard.

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-053.

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-053. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote, with Commissioner Tsao abstaining.

14. PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS: - None.

15. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

15A. LUS13-00002: CITY OF TORRANCE (KEEPING OF CHICKENS AND BEES)

Planning Commission consideration of a Land Use Study to consider the keeping of chickens and bees for single-family residences within the City.

Deputy Community Development Director Cessna explained that the Environmental Quality Commission has been exploring the possibility of allowing the keeping of chickens and bees on single-family residential properties for about a year and has had discussions with the City Council on this topic during joint meetings. She reported that staff has conducted public outreach at various meetings and the City's Environmental Fair where the response was overwhelmingly positive. She provided an overview of draft ordinances that would allow the keeping of chickens (hens only) and bees, noting that the hen ordinance was based on an existing ordinance that allows the keeping of pigeons and doves and the bee ordinance was based on an existing ordinance the allows the keeping of bees in industrial zones with the approval of the Environmental Quality Commission. She advised that the draft ordinances are not ready for adoption because there are still some issues that need to be addressed, and this item was brought forward so the Commission could provide input before the final drafts are prepared.

Commissioner Skoll stated that he has spoken with quite a few people and not one of them thought allowing the raising of chicken and bees in residential neighborhoods was a good idea. He suggested that a broader survey of residents would reveal widespread opposition. He related his belief that having chicken coops or beehives next door would reduce neighbors' property values and make their properties more difficult to sell due to the nuisance factor. He expressed concerns that there was nothing to prevent bees from migrating to a neighbor's property, depriving them of the use of their yard and creating a potential health hazard. He voiced support for retaining existing regulations that prohibit the keeping of chickens and bees in residential neighborhoods.

Commissioner Gibson noted that the petition submitted by proponents of backyard chicken raising (agenda material – page 11) includes a quote from a public health official recommending that a face mask be worn when tending to the flock to avoid inhaling bird dust and questioned whether bird dust could spread to neighboring properties.

Noting that a good portion of lots in Torrance are only about 5000 square feet, Chairperson Polcari voiced his opinion that this was not large enough to accommodate chicken raising or beekeeping without imposing on neighbors.

Commissioner Watson suggested that face masks are probably recommended as an added precaution, the same as when someone changes kitty litter or cleans a hamster cage. She pointed out that there are various sized lots in Torrance and the proposed regulations are designed to minimize the impact of neighbors. She noted that there's a growing interest in urban farming and sustainability and related her belief that people who undertake this type of activity are predisposed to want to make it work. She stated that she is violently allergic to bee stings, but still believes beekeeping can be done in a considerate manner. She cited the benefits of helping children connect with nature and understand food production.

Commissioner Tsao stated that he had concerns about public health and welfare because it's not clear who will be charged with monitoring chicken-raising and beekeeping operations. He pointed out that restaurants are inspected by the L.A. County Health Department once a year to safeguard public health. He voiced his opinion that more input is needed from residents along with more details on how this activity would be controlled.

Animal Control Supervisor David LaPlante reported that there are already many chickens in Torrance and they escape on a regular basis because while they cannot fly long distances, they can easily fly over a fence and Animal Control Officers then have to capture them, which is not an easy task. He related his experience that chickens are noisy, messy and create foul odors and their feed attracts rats and mice. Additionally, he noted that the chickens increase the number of predators in the area such as hawks and coyotes. He expressed concerns about enforcement, citing the difficulty of monitoring chicken-raising to ensure that chickens are kept in a hygienic environment and verifying that the four-hen limit is not exceeded. He asked about penalties should the chickens escape and revocation proceedings for non-compliance and questioned whether the hens could be raised for human consumption. He related his belief that farm animals do not belong in Torrance.

Commissioner Skoll stated that he also believes chickens would create a health hazard and it makes no sense to introduce health hazards into Torrance.

Asked about his position on beekeeping, Animal Control Supervisor LaPlante declined to take a position, explaining that he does not have expertise in that area.

Commissioner Herring reported that his grandparents raised chickens so he understood there can be some benefits, but he had reservations about allowing this activity in an urban environment for all the reasons previously mentioned. He indicated, however, that he was sympathetic to urban farmers and was open to the idea of further exploring this issue, but believes there are a lot more questions that need to be answered.

Commissioner D'anjou stated that she was more concerned about environmental-related issues as opposed to the planning/land use aspects of the proposed ordinances. She expressed concerns about the additional resources that would be necessary to review and maintain Special Animal Permits since Environmental Division staff is already stretched thin. She also expressed concerns that chicken feed would attract vermin, relating her experience that a half-eaten sandwich left outside draws raccoons. While not opposed to further research, she voiced her opinion that there needs to be broader public outreach because those attending an Environmental Fair tend to be more interested in sustainability/urban farming as compared to the general public.

Chairperson Polcari reviewed the Commission's options for taking action.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to accept and file the report. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou.

A brief discussion ensued, and it was the consensus of the Commission to amend the motion to clarify that they chose not to take a position because the regulation of beekeeping and chicken-raising was not within the Planning Commission's purview.

Commissioner Gibson offered an amended motion.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to accept and file the report as the Planning Commission had no land-use related concerns about the draft ordinances. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by unanimous vote.

Planning Manager Lodan offered to keep the Commission apprised of the draft ordinances progress.

15A. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR WEEKLY SUMMARY REPORTS

Planning Manager Lodan noted that Community Development Director Weekly Summary Reports for October 10, October 16, and October 24, 2014 were distributed to the Commission.

16. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the City Council approved an ordinance allowing unattended donation/collection bins at the November 4 City Council meeting.

17. LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the November 19, 2014 Planning Commission meeting.

18. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

18A. Commissioner Herring encouraged everyone to honor and express appreciation to military veterans on Veteran's Day.

18B. Commissioner Skoll questioned whether the view preservation/tree ordinance that is currently being explored would come before the Planning Commission.

Deputy Community Development Director Cessna stated that she was not sure how the City Council wants to approach this issue, but it was likely the Commission would be involved.

Commissioner Skoll related his belief that the Planning Commission needs to be involved.

18C. Commissioner Skoll asked about the status of Vince's Spaghetti restaurant, and Planning Manager Lodan reported that no application has been received concerning this property.

18D. Commissioner D'anjou thanked Commissioner Herring for his many years of military service.

18E. Referring to Item 12A, Commissioner Watson noted that the legal description for the Del Amo Fashion Center property includes a reference to land allotted to Susan Dominguez in the partitioning of Rancho San Pedro, a link that dates back hundreds of years.

19. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:23 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

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Approved as submitted December 3, 2014 s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk
